Bilateral arrangements

42. SHRI SABIR ALI:
SHRI MOHAMMED ADEEB:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the bilateral arrangements with different countries for strengthening our ties with them, country-wise; and

(b) the plans for the future in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI PRENEET KAUR): (a) and (b) The Government of India accords highest priority to strengthen political, economic and cultural relations and build strong and enduring partnerships with all countries on the basis of sovereign equality and mutual respect. India always strives to promote peace and stability to enable accelerated economic development within the framework of its enlightened national interest. This is facilitated through a series of mutually agreed bilateral/ regional/multilateral cooperative programmes and through regular engagement, particularly by high-level inter-actions. Official-level consultations supplement these efforts which encompass diverse areas of exchanges including social, economic, cultural, educational, scientific and technical cooperation.

Sikhs living as refugees in Pakistan

43. SARDAR TARLOCHAN SINGH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that large numbers of Sikhs have taken shelter in Gurudwara Panja Saheb in Pakistan;

(b) the number of Sikhs that are living as refugees in this camp and in a similar Gurudwara in Peshawar;

(c) whether any officer of his Ministry has visited these camps;

(d) whether any aid has been sent by Government of India for these refugees; and

(e) whether Government has taken up their welfare with Pakistan Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI PRENEET KAUR): (a) Yes.

(b) Government has seen media reports stating that there are about 2000 Sikh refugees at Gurudwara Panja Sahib. Some reports indicate the presence of refugees at Gurudwara Bhai Joga Singh in Peshawar, but their number is not known.

(c) No.